

Success through Partnerships

On this day of recognition for VITA and our people, it is fitting that our last pillar-of-focus is **Success through Partnerships**.

How many types of partnerships can we leverage for success at VITA??? There are more than we can count. But there are three types of partnerships that we are focusing on right from the start:

Partnerships with our customers. We have been saying since the start that this a “shared journey” between VITA and the agencies and it’s already starting to come true. We have already partnered with over 90 agencies to conduct due diligence and assess their IT staff, determining jointly who is in and out of scope. We have invited agency personnel to play key roles in our Transition Office – drawing from the State Library, DMV, VDOT and others. And now, a true example of partnership coming from both directions is coming to light. We have been approached by several agencies who would actually like to help us with the consolidation process and some have even asked if they can come on board early and be part of the staff that helps make VITA come to life for the rest of the transition.

And...

Partnerships with our suppliers. One of the great benefits expected of VITA is our ability to use the combined purchasing power of our centralized agency and processes to procure IT equipment and provide IT services more cost efficiently to our customers. And this involves partnering with our vendors – “we’ll give you more business, you’ll give us better prices or delivery or other benefit.” And we may ask our vendors to engage in public/private partnership pilots to develop either a new service or a new way of distributing our services.

And...

Partnerships with our people. Even the way we have been organizing our Transition Office has recognized the great interdependency and need for partnership among areas of our organization. We could have just said “HR, go do your thing. Finance, go do yours.” But we have instead met each week – usually more than once – to discuss what each element of our group was doing and how it might impact the others. We have asked these teams to partner together to get things done more efficiently – for example, the Due Diligence, the Finance, the Systems & Support Tools and the Small Agency teams (yes, all four of them!) partnered together to make sure that due diligence surveys to Agency Heads asked all the necessary questions at one time – rather than going to the same people with four different surveys.

Partnership is about teamwork in and out of the organization. And we are not the first to recognize the value of partnerships in operationally excellent concerns. Many operationally excellent companies have worked to build stronger relationships with their suppliers, allowing them to cut out many of the traditional steps in the buyer-supplier

relationship. For example, Ford has benefited greatly from these close relationships. When a shipment arrives at a Ford assembly plant, no one on the dock checks to make sure the freight matches the invoice, because there is no invoice! Instead, a receiving dock clerk checks a database of purchase orders submitted by Ford. If the shipment matches an outstanding purchase order, the clerk accepts the shipment and enters a confirmation number in the database. The computer automatically cuts a check to the supplier. The payment authorization takes place on the dock as the goods arrive, not weeks later in an accounts payable department. In concession for the prompt handling and payment of invoices (and think how large those invoices for steel are and what their prompt payment means to the seller), Ford is given highly preferred pricing. Which allows it to make a more affordable car.

Operationally excellent companies also work to develop close relationships with their customers. Just think about how the process of renting a car has changed over years. Ten years ago, renting a car at the airport required that you stand in at least one line (generally two or more) and fill out several different forms. Now, Hertz #1 Club Gold members submit their car rental preferences and payment information only once, and when they place an order for a car, Hertz already has all the information they need to match each customer with a car that will meet their needs and process the contract. Club members don't wait in lines at the airport or encounter any delays in the process. They simply get on a bus and get dropped off at their car. Hertz automatically bills their credit card (also part of their profile) at the end of their rental and experiences less opportunity for miskeying of credit card numbers or other mistakes that end up costing Hertz time and money. No! fuss, no hassle for both parties. That is a standard for basic service at an operationally excellent company.

Visit our hall of pillars on "Pillar Row," located on the 3rd Floor Canal St. side, in the hallway outside of Jim Mavredes' and Wayne Robertson's offices. Each day this week and next we will focus on one pillar or value. Come use our post-it "bricks" and help build the pillar with your thoughts, ideas, stories and sound-bytes. We invite you to add a brick to the pillar – give us your best ideas and wait to see how they surface!

Have you checked out our Operational Excellence focus in the 'About Us' section on our new VITA internet at www.vita.virginia.gov You'll find more information about the organization we are becoming – including 5 Pillars through which we will achieve success.

Technology Solutions

"VITA understands our customers' businesses and follows the rapid development and changes in technology. VITA applies new technologies to solve real business problems for our customers. We will deliver solutions, not just services." (source: VITA internet)

Technology Solutions is today's pillar-of-focus.

How do we live up to our 'technology solutions' pillar? Here are a few ideas:

VITA (and VITAzens) will be knowledgeable and stay current on emerging technologies or enhancements to existing technologies.

We will commit to selecting the right technology solutions for our customers. This means that we will not pursue new technology for technology's sake, but vow to find the technology solution that best fits our customers' needs. And, this means that we must first really understand our customers' needs!

Living up to these promises requires discipline and investment.

For example, to stay current on technologies, we must develop processes to identify and evaluate them. We must also develop processes to unlock the talent and knowledge about technology that our people have – to let them share what they know with the rest of the organization. For example, we are in the process of developing a virtual “community of practice” for people who are building their competence in best practice project management skills.

To ensure that we are applying technology as a solution, we must learn to always ask the right questions of ourselves. VITA will evaluate new technologies and services, keeping in mind the following questions:

Can this solution serve our many customers?

Will this solution give us the most value for our investment?

Does the solution meet our standards for quality and service?

Does this solution meet our customers needs first and wants second?

Is this solution evolutionary or revolutionary?

Who else provides “solutions” (rather than products or services)?

PriceCostco is a great example of a product company that works to understand the needs of their customers and deliver the right solutions. PriceCostco understand that their customer's main problem is “I want value” and their secondary problem is “I need a product” – for example, soap.

PriceCostco offers only 3,500 different items in their stores (compared to many of their competitors' 50,000+ items). The company's Consumer Reports approach to product selection leads to thorough examination of leading brands and the purchasing of the one brand in each category that represents the best value to their customers. In order to

generate excitement within their customer base, PriceCostco is constantly evaluating new products and adding a few new items to the mix each month. But if customers don't really need that product or see it as an extraordinary value, it is not introduced permanently in the line – even though PriceCostco folks may really want to do so. And by the way, the company is also dedicated to finding the best value for their customers by purchasing large quantities, which allows them to negotiate better prices for items.

At VITA, we need to think about our position as “trusted business advisor” to our customers. They have business problems that can be solved by technology. And they count on us to bring us the technology solutions to those problems. We can't be all things to all people, so it is our responsibility to develop expertise and buy wisely so that our portfolio of services meets the business and technology needs of the majority of our customers.

How do you think we should balance our personal interest in emerging technologies and skills surrounding them with our value proposition of “Operational Excellence”? Should we develop pilot programs? Should we reward high performers with the opportunity to go to emerging technology seminars?

Visit our hall of pillars on “Pillar Row,” located on the 3rd Floor Canal St. side, in the hallway outside of Jim Mavredes’ and Wayne Robertson's offices. Each day this week and next we will focus on one pillar or value. Come use our post-it “bricks” and help build the pillar with your thoughts, ideas, stories and sound-bytes. We invite you to add a brick to the pillar – give us your best ideas and wait to see how they surface!

Check out our Operational Excellence focus in the ‘About Us’ section on our new VITA internet at www.vita.virginia.gov. You'll find more information about the organization we are becoming – including 5 Pillars through which we will achieve success.

Excellence in Service Delivery

VITA customers can expect and have a right to demand the best in consistent and reliable delivery of solutions – what we promised, when we promised it. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Well in this simple sentence may lie the most complex objective we have set for ourselves. So it may sound simple, but it's not going to be easy!

FEDEX is an operationally excellent company. Think of the pressure on them to keep their costs and prices low. There are a lot of competitors – private carriers, UPS, even the United States Postal Service – that would love to take FEDEX' business. So FEDEX has become a well-oiled – and reliable – machine. They do a lot of things that we are talking about doing. They negotiate with their vendors to get better prices on airplanes, boxes,

trucks, fuel. They constantly ask their customers if they are satisfied and what it will take to make them even more so. They have standardized processes on which everyone is trained and everyone is measured. They use technology to measure, measure, measure so that they can instantly see when one part of their service delivery falls out of step with the others, or with standard. Then, because they know about it right away, they can put their best and brightest on the task of figuring it out and fixing it up. And they live up! to their motto.... "When it absolutely has to get there overnight."

So now you know what the pillar-of-focus is today: Excellence in Service Delivery. We've added some bricks to the column, to get us started. **You are invited to visit our hall of pillars on "Pillar Row," located on the 3rd Floor Canal St. side, in the hallway outside of Jim Mavredes' and Wayne Robertson's offices. Each day this week and next we will focus on one pillar or value. Come use our post-it "bricks" and help build the pillar with your thoughts, ideas, stories and sound-bytes. We invite you to add a brick to the pillar – give us your best ideas and wait to see how they surface!**

NO surprises – not bad ones, not good ones

Consistent, reliable service

Efficient and effective

Cost effective/great value

Dependable

Best Practices & standards of excellence

Training that enables excellences

Metrics for service levels

Customer reporting & feedback

Great service delivered with a smile

A culture of "no blame, just help fix it!"

We have begun demonstrating VITA's commitment to our "Excellence in Service Delivery" pillar this week by the way we have focused on service continuity. As much as we have supporters, there are those out there that just didn't think that we could keep the service coming during a major week of transition like this one – without disruptions or other challenges. Yet we have! We have done great, and we deserve this long holiday weekend. But when we come back, we are going to immediately begin – individually and as an organization – to find new ways to achieve service delivery excellence. Watch for a

program that invites you contribute your suggestions and begin building the spirit within your team by discussing the topic of service delivery openly and often – keep it in our focus!

Check out our Operational Excellence section in ‘About Us’ on our new VITA internet at www.vita.virginia.gov. You’ll find more information about the organization we are becoming – including 5 Pillars through which we will achieve success.

Help Build the Pillars of Success: People = Assets

Have you ever flown on Southwest Airlines? Would you believe that it is Operationally Excellent? Since most people identify operational excellence with process efficiency and cost savings, they almost always want to know "how does that go along with People = Assets".... so we're here today to shed some light!

People=Assets is today's pillar-of-focus.

The main concept behind 'people=assets' is:

- Of all of VITA's assets, people are our most important. Without people, we couldn't deliver service. Without people we couldn't delight our customers. Without people, we couldn't figure out how to turn 'technology' into '*solutions*.' So we must treat them and develop them accordingly - like the important asset that they are.

Southwest is an example of an operationally excellent company that excels at leveraging their people assets to achieve their goals. Southwest is cost efficient, it doesn't try to be all things to all people, it focuses on solutions (flights) that suit a wide audience. But step on a Southwest plane and you'll know the impact of their people. Their staff is exceptionally well-trained. They receive in-depth training, both in formal training sessions and on-the-job. They have 'buddy' systems and help coach each other on how to constantly improve and serve customers. Their performance reviews are tied to their ability to improve and deliver on their skills. And guess who has input to their reviews??? Customers! Peers! Supervisors! Anyone that is influenced or touched by that employee. At Southwest, there is a partnership of sorts between the airline and the employees. They work together to identify cost effective and efficient ways to keep the service level and the skill level high. Both parties make an investment in the process. It is recognized that it doesn't happen all at once, and everyone is constantly working on taking both the opportunities for employees and the outcome - outstanding service delivery and customer service - to a new level.

Culture is a huge part of success at Southwest. This is one operationally excellent organization it would be "fun" to work for.... In fact that is one of their organizational goals - to be fun and have fun. You can stop anyone in a hallway - from the CEO to the janitor and they can each tell you what Southwest is about.

We have a chance to begin demonstrating our commitments to our "People=Assets" pillar this week, by the way we interact with each other and our work. We are already starting to see grass-roots commitments to this principle. One of our people created index cards with the new standard phone-answering script on them and passed them out so that people would remember how to answer the phone. Another welcomed new employees into the organization with a reference to our motto "Expect the Best." This is VITAzens taking responsibility for helping each other to learn and build the new culture.

Visit our hall of pillars on "Pillar Row," located on the 3rd Floor Canal St. side, in the hallway outside of Jim Mavredes' and Wayne Robertson's offices. Each day this week and next we will focus on one pillar or value. Come use our post-it "bricks" and help build the pillar with your thoughts, ideas, stories and sound-bytes. We invite you to add a brick to the pillar - give us your best ideas and wait to see how they surface!

People are already adding bricks to our People pillar: "competent staff," "professional development path," "performance-driven advancement," "living our values" ... these are just some of the bricks that YOU have added!

Check out our Operational Excellence focus in the 'About Us' section on our new VITA internet at www.vita.virginia.gov/about/opExcellence.cfm. You'll find more information about the organization we are becoming - including 5 Pillars through which we will achieve success.

Help Build the Pillars of Success: Operational Excellence through Transparency

Have you checked out our Operational Excellence focus in the 'About Us' section on our new VITA internet site at www.vita.virginia.gov/about/opExcellence.cfm? You'll find more information about the organization we are becoming - including Five Pillars through which we will achieve success.

Today's pillar-of-focus is **Transparency**. What does that mean, anyway?

There are two concepts to 'transparency':

- We are like a utility, we're there, but you never have to think about whether we'll be there. It's like when you flip on the light switch, you don't wonder, "is it going to come on today?"

And....

- We are a glass house - our budget, our organization and our operations are "illuminated" for anyone to see

And maybe there's a third concept, too:

- The growth and build-out of VITA is like a rising tide. It doesn't hit you all at once, it happens gradually - we incorporate the best from agencies as they consolidate and we improve without disrupting.

Walmart is an example of an operationally excellent company that excels at transparency. For them, it means that customers can go into a Walmart store anywhere in the United States and find what they are looking for - for several reasons. First, the stores are laid out the same so that they are 'easy to do business with.' But the transparency part comes from the way they manage their supply chain and delivery. When you remove an item from a shelf at Walmart and take it to the check out line, the bar-code scanner automatically sends a message to the inventory system that one of that item has been sold. Then the inventory system sends an automatic message to the warehouse, which automatically queues one of that item for delivery to the store in question. At the same time, the warehousing system automatically signals the supplier that one of the item is needed in the warehouse. People are not eliminated by this process, they are freed up to actually work the exceptions - solve problems and provide customer service. To the store manager, inventory replenishment is "transparent." To the warehouse, ordering from suppliers is "transparent." To the customer, Walmart's shelves are consistently stocked.

We have a chance to begin demonstrating 'transparency' this week, by focusing on service continuity. If we can accomplish our transition to VITA this week with no disruption in service, our stakeholders can begin to believe that we have transparency - no matter what is going on, they can count on us!

Visit our hall of pillars on "Pillar Row," located on the 3rd Floor Canal St. side, in the hallway outside of Jim Mavredes' and Wayne Robertson's offices. Each day this week and next we will focus on one pillar or value. Come use our post-it "bricks" and help build the pillar with your thoughts, ideas, stories and sound-bytes. We invite you to add a brick to the pillar - give us your best ideas and wait to see how they surface!

